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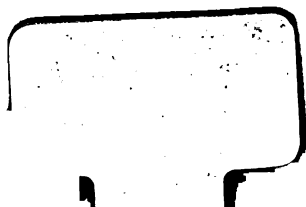
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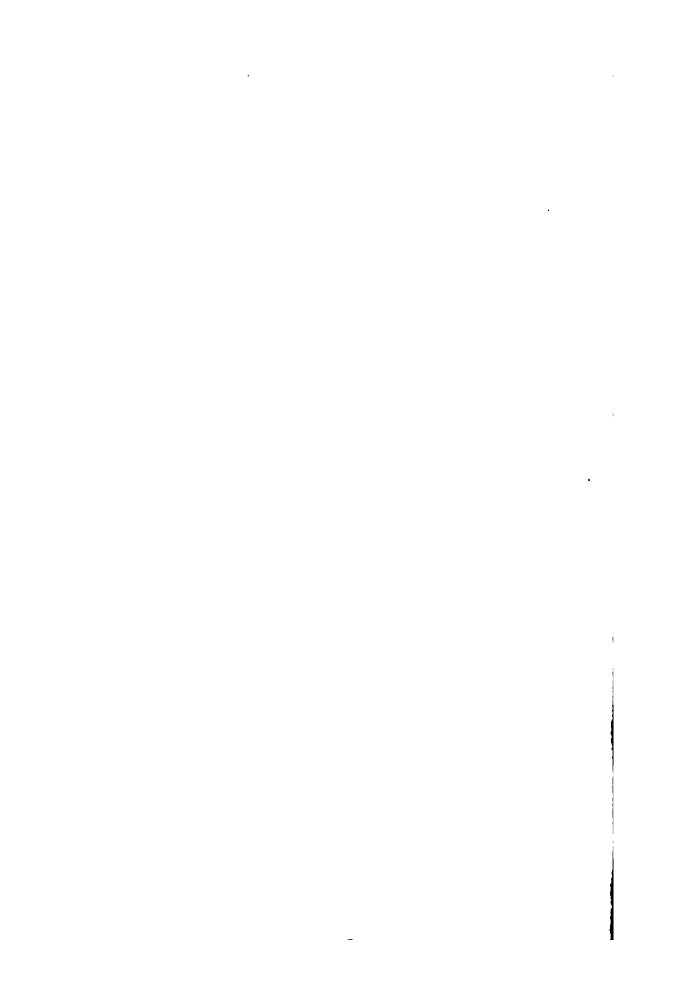
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THE
THREEFOLD
CORD OF
JUSTIFICATION.

45. 204.





THE
THREEFOLD CORD,
&c.

**THE
THREEFOLD CORD;**

OR,

JUSTIFICATION

**BY THE GRACE OF GOD,
THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST,**

AND

THE FAITH OF MAN.

BY

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CONDUIT STREET.**

JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE.—ROM. iii. 24.

JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD.—ROM. v. 9.

JUSTIFIED BY FAITH.—ROM. v. 1.

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THE THREEFOLD CORD,

§c.

CHAPTER I.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF JUSTIFICATION.

JOB xxv. 4.

“How then can man be justified with God?”

A HUMBLE opinion of ourselves, and fear for the safety of our own state by nature, are indispensable to a hearty reception of the Gospel. We must know ourselves to be, in the strong language of Scripture, “Wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” before we can apply in earnest for the supply of our wants out of the fulness that is in Christ Jesus. We must be fully

convinced of the awful holiness and justice of God—of the unbending severity of his law—of our own utter inability to meet its requirements, before we can be prepared to seek for pardon and acceptance—not through our own repentance and merits, but simply on the ground of another's merits, and for his righteousness' sake.

On this account, while the substance of the everlasting Gospel is the same in all ages, since the nature and wants of man continue the same, the manner in which it is stated must vary according to the perversions of truth that may prevail; or the prejudices that hinder its reception. When addressing the Jews, the first preachers of the Gospel spoke of Jesus of Nazareth, as Him "of whom

Moses in the law, and the prophets did write." To the Athenians on Mars Hill, St. Paul began with declaring "Him whom," according to the inscription on their own altar, "they *ignorantly* worshipped." But in writing to the Galatians, who had "so soon been removed from Him that called them unto another Gospel," he preached the Gospel as contrasted with the law, in order to deliver them from the corruptions of truth brought in by Judaizing teachers. If they who had the Gospel preached to them by the inspired apostles, with the Holy Ghost manifestly sent down from heaven, were so soon removed from their stedfastness, is it matter of wonder, that after the lapse of eighteen centuries perversions of truth should be greatly

multiplied, and the nicest discrimination be requisite, in so "dividing the word of truth," as to distinguish plainly between "the Gospel of our salvation," and those fatal and subtle errors which men have substituted in its place. It was our Lord's own prediction, that "false Christs and false prophets would arise and deceive many:" there never has been an age in which this prediction has not been fulfilling: the father of lies has ever some counterfeit ready to put in the place of saving truth, suited to the nature of *the times*; and our duty is clearly to state the truth as it is in Jesus, and to display its beauty the more conspicuously, by contrasting it with the dark and deadly background of the lie that is most opposed to it.

This duty is the more constraining, because human nature “loves darkness rather than light.” Every man is by nature prone to set up “a false Christ” for himself. While multitudes call Christ their Saviour, they take Him for such in a sense and in a character different from what the Scriptures represent Him to be ; and that sense and that character vary, according to the views they take of their own condition, and the nature of the salvation which they think they require.

Most lamentable it is to reflect, that to many who now cry “Lord, Lord,” without any misgivings as to their acceptance, He will hereafter say, “Depart from me ; I never knew you.” To save you, beloved

Reader, from this awful sentence, I design in the present little work to attempt an answer to that most important of all important questions—“HOW CAN MAN BE JUSTIFIED WITH GOD?” But before I do so, it will be well both for you and for me to make the earnest enquiry, “Who is sufficient for these things?” How can we “know the mind of the Lord?” and to receive in humility and in a spirit of prayer the answer of the Word, “Our sufficiency is of God;” “No man can receive any thing except it be given him from above;” “The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”

In prosecuting this deeply interesting subject of enquiry, we will consider the question, First—

AS IMPLYING THE IMPOSSIBILITY
OF MAN'S JUSTIFYING HIMSELF BE-
FORE GOD.

This is the sense in which the question is asked by Bildad in the text—"Dominion and fear are with Him: He maketh peace in his high places. Is there any number of his armies, and upon whom doth not his light arise? How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, that is a worm?" The object of the speaker is to show the impossibility of the thing, by exalting the glory and power of God on the one hand, and sinking the nature of

man to its proper level on the other. In order to see this impossibility in the strongest light, we must give its full weight and emphasis to each of the three principal terms in the sentence, "How can *man* be *justified* with *God*?"

1. Let us first enquire into the true nature of *justification*. What is it to be *justified*? In the scriptural sense of the term, when used to signify a sinner's acceptance with God, it means simply to be *accounted* or *considered righteous*; but when employed with reference to man's comparative righteousness in the eyes of his fellow men, it means to declare or pronounce righteous. Thus, Deut. xxv. 1, it is said to be the duty of a judge, "If there be a controversy between men, and they

come into judgment, to *justify the righteous*," i. e. to pronounce him free from blame: while, Is. v. 23, they are condemned "who *justify the wicked* for reward," i. e. pronounce him righteous when he is not so. *Justification*, then, is *the being declared righteous according to the law*. But this, it must be remembered, is spoken of judgment before a human bar, and of righteousness as to some specific point of conduct. It is possible that a person may be justified as to the charge on which he is arraigned, while on some other count, unknown to his accuser, he may be guilty. The judge pronounces him *righteous* only as far as that he is innocent of the crime laid to his charge. But when we come to speak of the justification of man before

GOD, it is evident that we speak of *justification according to the whole law of God*, so that the righteousness requisite to justify is of unlimited extent, and the difficulty of justification proportionably increased. Would we know, then, what it is for "man to be justified with GOD," we must enquire into the nature and demands of that law whereby he will be judged.

In the first place, that law is *spiritual*. It takes into account the thoughts, the intents, the motives of the HEART. Human laws can only take cognizance of the outward conduct; but "in that day, God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to the Gospel." A man may be honourably acquitted at the human tribunal, while at the

same time, in the course of that very transaction for which he has been tried, he has been guilty of pride, of passion, of deceit, and many other sins of the heart, which will ensure his condemnation at the bar of divine judgment. Nay, in the very virtues and actions which call forth the esteem and admiration of his fellow men, there are blemishes and detractions which render them “an abomination in the sight of God.” There is pride in his integrity, vain-glory in his honour, ostentation in his charity, intemperance in his zeal, cunning in his wisdom; yea, even iniquity in his holy things, formality and hypocrisy in his religious observances, self-righteousness in his solemn duties! These are among the secrets that will be brought

forward at the last day, and with all, and far more than all the patience and precision with which external and circumstantial evidence is taken in courts of justice, will secret principles be traced out, and hidden motives be unravelled by "the quick and powerful and piercing Word of the living God."

But, in the next place, the law by which we shall be judged is *uncompromising*. The strict scrutiny of which we have been speaking will not be made in vain. The iniquities of the heart will not be disclosed, and then passed by unpunished. This could only be to expose the weakness or changeableness of the Lawgiver. Once only has God formally given his commands to men, and then the same voice which promised, "Do

this and live," added also the fearful denunciation, "And cursed be every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." The consequences of a single transgression are here marked out with an exactness which no subtlety can evade. In order to escape death and obtain life by obedience to the moral law, *all* things that it requires must be done, in thought, word, and deed, and that *continually*. And on "*every one*" who fails, without exception, does the curse of a broken law descend. For those who would justify themselves before God by their own obedience, this rigour has never been relaxed. When our Lord was asked, "What shall I do to inherit the kingdom of heaven?" He said unto him,

“What is written in the law? how readest thou?” and he answering, said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.” And He said unto him, “Thou hast answered right. *This do and thou shalt live.*” Here is no hint given that the strictness of the law was about to be relaxed to meet the weakness of fallen man. The Saviour of the world, the meek, compassionate, forgiving Saviour, when asked the measure of obedience which would ensure eternal life, repeats the two great commandments which include all others, with the same uncompromising condition annexed to them as was declared by the mouth of the Jewish lawgiver,

“This do and thou shalt live.” And the awful alternative is necessarily implied, “*Cursed* be thou if thou continuest not in all things, that are written in the book of the law to do them.”

But this, it may be said, was before the Saviour’s death had effected that alteration in the terms of salvation, whereby a sincere though imperfect obedience is accepted as a title to eternal life. What then say the inspired Apostles, who preached the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven after the Saviour’s death, resurrection, and ascension? “I testify again,” says St. Paul to the Galatians, “to *every man* that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, who-

soever of you are justified, (or seek to be justified) by the law, ye are fallen from grace." Here then is a distinct declaration that the demands of the law were not lowered by the death of Christ. The Apostle plainly asserts, that whosoever sought to be justified by the law, i.e. by his own works, was a debtor to do *the whole* law, or he could not be justified by it. And what says St. James? "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one* point, he is guilty of all. For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."

The instances adduced by the Apostle may be varied, and his rule applied to every transgression of the

law, whether in thought, word, or deed. For He that said, Thou shalt not kill, said also, "Thou shalt not be angry with thy brother without a cause." And He who said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," says also, "Thou shalt not look upon a woman to lust after her in thine heart." So then, if thou commit not the extreme transgression, but art guilty of the impure thought and the angry word, thou art become a transgressor of the law, which says, "Cursed be every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

From these passages it plainly appears, that to be JUSTIFIED before God, is to be proved perfectly righteous and entirely free from sin. Since the fall of man, but one law

has ever been given, a law extending to all the thoughts of the heart, the words of the lips, and the actions of the life, and to that law is annexed but *one* unswerving condition, continued and complete obedience. That alone ensures escape from eternal death and the enjoyment of everlasting life.

Here, then, dear Reader, let me pause and press distinctly on your notice the difficulties of man's justification before God, as implied in the import of the term "JUSTIFIED." "How then can man be *justified* with God?" Probably you were not fully aware of the whole extent of the undertaking, when you thought of giving up a satisfactory account to God at the last. You deemed that something far short of this complete

justification, this entire freedom from sin, this establishing of a perfect righteousness, was sufficient to obtain your present acceptance with God, and to secure your everlasting salvation. There are various phrases current among men, which imply this delusive hope. Thus we hear of *the efficacy of sincere repentance*, the acceptableness of *doing one's utmost*, the meritoriousness of an *useful* and the safety of a *harmless* life. Now all these resting places of partial security are swept away by the appalling statement, that the requirements of God's law demand nothing short of sinless perfection as the ground of acceptance with Him. The question is not, "How shall I so act as that my good deeds may outweigh the evil?" "How shall

I live, so that I may avoid the commission of gross sins, and be found guilty only of venial faults?" but, "How can I be justified with God?" How can I establish a claim to that unspotted righteousness which will endure the close inspection of Him, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?" Surely, if you calmly and fairly weigh these things, you cannot but feel the impossibility implied in the text, "How *can* man be *justified* with God?"

But this impossibility will appear in a stronger light still, if we proceed,

2. To give its due weight and emphasis to another part of the question, and enquire, "How can *man* be justified with God?" There was indeed a time when man was justified by God in that

very manner which we have been considering — when coming fresh from the hands of his Maker he was pronounced “very good;” but from that state of justification he fell by the commission of a single transgression, verifying the statement of St. James before quoted, “He that offendeth in *one* point is guilty of all;” and sin, having once entered, overflowed like a flood, and corrupting every passion and principle of the heart, rendered his return to that state, by his own works and deservings, for ever hopeless. In the words of our ninth Article, “Original sin is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righte-

ousness, (i. e. from a state of justification) so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit."

In the strong language of the Homily for the Nativity, "By his fall it came to pass, that as before he was blessed, so now he was accursed; as before he was loved, so now he was abhorred; as before he was most beautiful and precious, so now he was most vile and wretched in the sight of his Lord and Maker. Instead of the image of God, he was now become the image of the devil; instead of the citizen of heaven, he was now become the bond-slave of hell; having in himself *no one part* of his former purity and cleanness, but being altogether spotted and defiled, insomuch, that now he seemed

to be nothing else but a lump of sin, and by the just judgment of God was condemned to everlasting death."

Thus the malignant effect of sin was to deprave every principle in the nature of man, so that every endowment which God had bestowed on him for his own glory, became a fresh barrier to his fulfilling the righteousness of the law. Does the law command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God?" The carnal, i. e. the natural mind, is pronounced in Scripture to be "*enmity* with God." Is it the duty of man to *fear* his Maker? "There is *no fear* of God before his eyes." Does God invite him to know and seek the Lord? "There is *none that understandeth*, there is none

that *seeketh after God.*" Is he called to "*remember his Creator?*" His depraved memory leads him to *forget God,*" so that "God is not in all his thoughts." Is he privileged to joy and delight himself in the Lord? "He forsakes the fountain of living waters, and hews out unto himself cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water;" he "sets his affections on things below;" "he *will* not come to his Saviour that he may have life." Peculiar reason there is then for the repetition of the demand which follows the words of the text, "How can *he* be clean that is born of a woman?" How fearfully is the difficulty increased, at least to our apprehension, when we come to consider the actual nature and

character of man! For if he that offendeth in *only one* point is guilty beyond his own power to atone, how aggravated is the guilt of him who offends in *many* things! If he be “cursed who *continueth* not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them,” how tremendous must be the anathema that burdens him of whom “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil *continually*.”

But let us pass on from considering this impossibility, as it arises from the nature of man itself, and view it in its connexion with the nature and history of other intelligent beings. It would appear in a strong light by contrasting the nature of man with the purity of the material creation and the holi-

ness of the elect angels. "Behold," continues Bildad, "even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight; how much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man that is a worm?"

"What is man," asks Eliphaz, "that he should be clean, or he that is born of a woman that he should be *righteous*? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints, yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight: how much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh in iniquity like water?" The truth of this flashes on the mind at once, and need not be dwelt on. But the existence of these obedient and faithful subjects forces on us a conviction that still further confirms the truth we are considering.

Can *man*, who is a sinner, be justified and dealt with as a righteous person without injustice to those who have never sinned? God has a moral government to maintain throughout the universe, and the rights and interests of every portion of his subjects must be impartially consulted. We forget this when we fancy the easiness of God's overlooking sin, and receiving back the sinner to favour; we imagine that He can as freely do so as an earthly monarch reprieves a condemned criminal. But let us remember that the Almighty is not only the Judge of all the earth, but the Sovereign of the whole universe; that He would be dealing unjustly with his faithful subjects, if He put no difference be-

tween them and sinners; and that his government would be dishonoured, and his glory tarnished, if He suffered his law to be broken, and his power defied with impunity.

But there is another class of moral beings whose existence forms a more fearful barrier still to the justification of man. We may imagine all the ranks of the holy and the happy foregoing *their* rights, if God were pleased to overlook them, crowding around the throne of judgment, to plead for the restoration of their erring brethren, and welcoming them back with the generous and overflowing joy of spirits who know no envy. But not so our adversary the devil, and the dark legions that share his lot and obey his bidding. He stands before the throne of God as

the accuser of man whom he has tempted to share his guilt, and claims him as the partaker of his punishment. As he was the first to flatter man with the delusion, "Thou shalt not surely die," so he would be foremost to upbraid God, were He disposed to relax the truth of his word. And surely there would be reason in his remonstrance. If the severity of justice were relaxed in the one case, why not in the other? If one race of sinful creatures were received back to glory in the exercise of the sovereign mercy of God, would not the other go to their place in the enjoyment of the bitter triumph that the glory of the Most High was sullied by their destruction?

Yet these are the adversaries that will withstand us at the bar of judg-

ment, to magnify our multiplied transgressions, to urge the guiltiness of hours of temptation, known only to themselves and God, and to call with unrelenting malignity for the execution of strict justice on our devoted heads. And if in courts of human judgment the heart of the conscious offender quails at the thought that his case is open to the inspection of a keen and subtle and talented opponent, who will sift his character and conduct to the utmost, and in the name of offended justice call for his condemnation, how must our hearts sink within us at the thought of meeting such an accuser as Satan at the bar of judgment! He knows every aggravation of our guilt—he remembers every tittle of the evidence that lies against us—he is

aware that the Judge must decide according to the law, and, as far as we are concerned, he already rejoices in the certainty of our condemnation. Let us realize this scene as often as we are tempted to think with complacency of rendering up our account at the last, until we feel in all its force the emphasis of the question, "How can *man* be justified with God?"

3. But there is a more alarming emphasis still in the expression of the text, "How shall man be justified with *God*?" It is not the character of an earthly monarch, but the perfections of the everlasting Jehovah, that are involved in the difficulty. It is indeed this which has given force to all that has gone before; for the spirituality of the law proceeds from the omniscience of the

Lawgiver, and its uncompromising severity from his unbending justice. The peace and the happiness of the unfallen creation arise from his perfect goodness, and our adversary the devil would have no power to accuse, unless he could appeal to the unchangeable truth, and justice, and holiness of God. But it may increase the apprehension with which we contemplate the subject, to reflect that the giver of that strict and holy law by which we shall be judged, will himself be the scrutinizing and impartial Judge, and the swift and eternal Avenger. It is not with abstract principles of right and wrong that we have to do; but with HIM who is the personification of all principle, whose character is perfection, whose eye is omniscience, whose arm is

omnipotence, whose word is truth, whose will is law, whose smile is life, whose frown is death. What encouragement has He given in his word or in his dealings to the expectation that He will justify the sinner on the ground of any thing in himself? In the very same breath that He proclaims himself "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin;" He adds, "*And that will by no means clear the guilty.*" "Mine eyes," says He of his people Israel, "are upon all their ways; they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes." All our *ways* then are marked by Him. But this is

not all; "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee," says the Psalmist, "*our secret sins* in the light of thy countenance." His eyes then behold all our most secret sins, and has He given us any reason to expect, that having once observed, He will ever forget them? "The sin of Judah," He says, "is written," (as Job wished his words to be written, when he desired them to be remembered for ever,) "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron and with a point of a diamond." The sins of men are written in the book of God's remembrance, and that book will be opened in the last day, "to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." It is the "*God*" who has said these things with whom we

must be "justified," or perish for ever. And more than this, God has not only said, but *done* much to assure us of his hatred against sin; and his vengeance on unjustified sinners. He has once "destroyed man from off the face of the earth;" He has rained "fire and brimstone from heaven upon the guilty cities of the plain." His Word declares many more instances in which He has signally punished sin, and what is He doing in the regular course of his providence? Every pulse that beats within you, a sinner's death is somewhere or other in this world of sin, verifying the truth of God's first threat to man, "Dying thou shalt die." It is the God who has done and is doing these things with whom we must be justified, or perish everlastingly. Whe-

ther then we consider his attributes, his word, or his dealings, we are constrained to exclaim, "How can man be justified with God?" And if we are wise, we must cry with the Psalmist, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

And now, having traced the difficulty to *Him*, in his hands we may safely leave it for the present. If any of my Readers, who never felt the difficulty before, are led to say, as one of old, "Who then can be saved?" it is the very point to which I have aimed to bring you. For, blessed be God, I am privileged to give the same reply, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." And

to establish this point will be my object in the ensuing chapters. Meanwhile, think not, I pray you, that from the abstruseness of the term Justification, the truth which it conveys is one of but little importance to salvation. The term may seem to unaccustomed ears to savour of the technicality of theological discussion; but it is that which the Scriptures employ to express the most essential of all truths, the acceptance of a sinner with his Maker.

If this subject does not now press on your attention with all the urgency that of right belongs to it, it is because there is nothing in your outward condition to make you feel its importance. But it will not be always thus. Sickness and disease will one day invade your house of

clay, and disturb that frail repose which depends on outward things. And then, amid the thick-coming fancies of a dying pillow, the question will recur in all the intensity of its interest—a question which none may then be at hand to answer, and which your own rambling faculties may be but ill qualified to meet—“How can man be justified with God?”

But beyond all doubt there will come a period, when the momentous question will be the one absorbing theme of interest to you, as to all the awakened millions of the human race—when the Judge of quick and dead shall be seated on his throne, and “the judgment be set and the books be opened,” and your eternal destiny is about to be fixed, according to the

things that are written therein—Oh! who can tell the overwhelming interest that will be attached to the question, “HOW CAN MAN BE JUSTIFIED WITH GOD?”

CHAPTER II.

JUSTIFICATION BY THE IMPUTED
RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

Rom. v. 9.

“Justified by his blood.”

IN considering the questions of Bil-
dad in the last chapter, we viewed
them as implying the impossibility
of man's justifying himself before
God ; and we endeavoured to obtain
as complete a view as we could of
that impossibility, by laying its due
stress upon each term employed in
the sentence. Let us review what
has been already advanced for the
sake of clearness. “How shall man
be *justified* with God?” Justification

is nothing less than the acquittal from all charge of sin, and the acknowledgment of a claim to perfect righteousness; for the law, upon obedience to which justification depends, is *spiritual* in its nature, extending to all the thoughts, intents, and motives of the heart; and *uncompromising* in its demands, attaching to one single act of disobedience the stern infliction of the penalty, "Cursed be every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." And this rigour of the law, as a covenant of works, has never been relaxed. The Gospel contains no traces of such a mitigation; on the contrary, our Lord himself, as the great Teacher come from God, repeats the same terms,

when He says to the Jewish lawyer, "This do, and thou shalt live." St. Paul declares to the Galatians, that if they sought to be justified by the law, they were "debtors to do *the whole law*;" and St. James affirms, that "he that transgresseth in *one* point is guilty of all." "How then can man be *justified* with God?"

But the difficulty is still further increased when we come to consider the *nature* of man and his relative position in the universe. He is a sinner by nature and by practice; every faculty of his nature is depraved by the fall, so that "that which should have been for his good, is unto him an occasion of falling." Instead of being "guilty in *one* point," he "offends in *many*;" instead of yielding *continual* obedi-

ence, his thoughts are "*only evil continually.*"

And then, when we consider him in relation to other intelligent beings, we are met by the conviction, that the justice of God requires Him to punish the guilty, for the sake of the unoffending portion of his creatures ; and still more is He bound to deal even-handed justice to all offenders. If a lake of fire be prepared for the devil and his angels, that portion is the just due of all who hold on their side ; and the fear of the guilty sinner who has yielded to their temptations must be aggravated tenfold by the reflection, that multitudes of these awful beings are prepared to clamour for his destruction, when they stand together before the same bar of divine and eternal judgment.

How then can man, the transgressor of the divine law, the apostate from the ranks of the holy and the good, the ally of devils in their rebellion against Jehovah—"How can *man* be justified with God?"

But when we still further proceed to consider this difficulty in connection with God himself—when we remember that He is the holy, and just, and good Framer of the law, and will himself be the impartial Judge and the stern inflicter of the penalty—when we call to mind that He has said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," and has made good his word by cutting off millions in their sins, and constantly fulfilling his first threat to man, "Dying, thou shalt die"—what hope remains to the guilty sinner who enquires, "How can man be

justified with *God?*" Surely the only door of hope is, that some way has been devised and accomplished by himself, whereby He can be at the same time just and yet answer the prayer, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for *in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*" The Gospel opens that door; it furnishes an answer to that otherwise unanswerable question of Bildad, in all its branches. Is it asked, "How can man be *justified* with God?" The answer is, "We are justified by the blood and righteousness of the Son of God." His mediation has overcome the difficulties involved in the full meaning of the term "*justified*;" his blood has removed the curse of the law; his righteousness has fulfilled the

demands of the law; for "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

Is it asked, "How can *man* be justified with God?" What is it that constitutes the difference between those who are justified by Christ and those who are not? The answer is, "We are justified by *faith*." "He that *believeth* on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth *not* the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Faith is the *hand* whereby the self-condemned sinner receives the righteousness of Christ as his title to eternal life, and therefore we conclude that "a man is *justified by*

faith, without the deeds of the law."

Again is it asked, "How can man be justified with *God*?" The answer is, "We are justified *by grace*." It is to the grace of God himself that we owe the gift of his dear Son in the first place ; it is to the grace of God that every individual sinner owes the application of that gift to himself. "We are *justified freely by his grace*, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Thus as we found that there was a threefold difficulty in the justification of man, arising from the nature of *justification*, the nature of *man*, and the nature of *God*; so is there a threefold answer supplied by the Gospel, which meets the difficulty at every

point. We are justified by *blood*, justified by *faith*, and justified by *grace*. These are the three things which Scripture connects with the term *justified*, when applied to our acceptance with God; and into the meaning of these three phrases it will now be our business to enquire, as furnishing an answer to the question, "How can man be justified with God?" But let us not forget, that one essential provision in the covenant of grace, without which all the rest would be in vain, is this, "*They shall be all taught of God.*" Let us look then for the fulfilment of this promise, not "leaning to our own understanding," not receiving with implicit faith the word of man; but searching the Scriptures to see if

these things be so, "that our faith may not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." "How then can man be *justified* with God?"

The first point to be established with respect to the work of the Son of God as the Saviour of man is, *that He came as a second Adam, a second federal head* of the human race. It was needful that the manner of man's redemption should correspond to the manner of his creation and fall. All who are fallen, fell through the sin of one: all who are saved, are saved through the righteousness of one. This truth is expressly stated by St. Paul, in the fifth chapter of Romans. In ver. 14, Adam is styled "the figure of Him that was to come;" and the sum and substance of the whole passage is expressed in

ver. 19 ; “ For as by one man’s *disobedience* many were made *sinner*s, so by the *obedience* of one shall many be *made righteous*.” The mode of recovery corresponds with the mode of the fall : the fall was by the offence of one, in which the multitudes of the fallen had no share ; the recovery was by the righteousness of one, in which the multitude of those who are saved had no part. Death comes by the imputation of one man’s sin : life comes by the imputation of one man’s righteousness. It is important, at the outset of the enquiry in which we are engaged, to have a distinct idea of this close correspondence between our fall in Adam and our salvation by Christ, in order that we may be fully prepared to find that the grounds of our justification are

altogether out of ourselves—that as our condemnation in the first instance depends on our federal union with the first man who sinned, so our acceptance, from first to last, depends on our union with the only man who never sinned. Our union with the first Adam is by birth; our union with the second Adam is by faith. “For,” says the Apostle, “ye are all the children of God, by faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

Another preliminary point to be settled, before we proceed to consider what Christ has done for our justification, is, *that his nature is such as fully to qualify Him for the work.* This is indeed essential to his being a second Adam; for as by man came sin, by man also must come the satisfaction for sin. . And this is the rea-

son why the Scriptures are so explicit in their statements respecting the human nature of Christ.* But it was not only needful that He should be a creature, in order that He might be "*under the law*," and so work out a legal righteousness: it was also needful that He should be *more* than a creature, in order that the righteousness which He wrought might be transferable to others. For no mere creature can render more than is due from itself: the highest archangel, when he has done all, is still an "unprofitable servant," because he has only "done that which it was his duty to do." And therefore "God sent forth HIS SON," to "be MADE OF A WOMAN," and to be "MADE

* See Heb. ii. 14, &c. and iv. 15; Gal. iv. 4, 5.

UNDER THE LAW." The deity of Christ is as essential to his mediatorship as his humanity. "The first man is of the earth, earthy; THE SECOND MAN IS THE LORD FROM HEAVEN." And thus is that Mediator found, of whom Job felt the need when he said, "He is not a man as I am, that we should come together in judgment; neither is there any DAYSMAN betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." Such a *daysman* is the Lord Jesus Christ: his right hand is Godhead; his left hand is humanity. As a creature He obeyed the law, and so wrought out a righteousness according to the law; but in that He is more than a creature, He needs it not for himself; and as God bestows it and its infinite deserts upon sin-

ners who have none of their own; Christ, as God and man in one person, being thus constituted a second Adam, the declaration of Scripture respecting Him is, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"—the end of the moral law, and the end of the ceremonial law; and we shall obtain a complete view of his work by considering it in this light.

1. In the first place, the Lord Jesus Christ yielded throughout his whole life that perfect and unswerving obedience to the law of God which it requires, and without which none can be justified by it. That law we have seen is *spiritual*, extending to the thoughts, the desires, the principles, the affections of the heart. And such was the nature

of the Saviour's obedience : it flowed from a nature perfectly conformed to the image of God. His *will* was in entire accordance with the Divine will ; so that when He came into the world, He is represented as saying, " Lo ! I come to do thy will, O God ; I am content to do it ; *yea, thy law is within my heart.*" The human nature of our blessed Lord was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, for it was begotten of the Holy Ghost in the Virgin's womb, so that it was said to her, " That Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." He possessed a perfect *knowledge* of the Divine will, for He testified, " I *know* that thy commandment is life everlasting ;" " No man knoweth the Father but the Son ;" and what

He perfectly knew, He cordially loved. He professed of himself, "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." Such was his inward preparation of heart for the work He had to do, and what was his outward manifestation of it? He declared his determination to "*fulfil all righteousness*;" He appealed to his watchful and malignant enemies, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" yea, He affirmed respecting that most watchful and malignant of all enemies, to whose frequent temptation He was exposed, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." And what was his appeal to the Searcher of hearts, "I have glorified thee in the earth; I have

finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And was this an idle boast? Hear the testimony of the Father respecting Him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus in his holy life did Jesus "magnify the law and make it honourable," yielding to it that perfect obedience which it requires, and which we are unable to yield; fulfilling it in the utmost rigour of its requirements—"Do this and live, and cursed be every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them."

As there is not a single thought, word, or work of our whole lives, which is not more or less defiled with sin, so there was not one of his which could not stand the scrutiny of Him who "is of purer eyes than to behold

iniquity." Neither the pure, heart-searching eye of God, nor the keen malicious watchfulness of Satan, could detect a flaw. "He was in all points tempted like as we are, *yet without sin.*" He was followed at every step by the demands of an uncompromising law, and the issue was the achievement of a pure, perfect, and everlasting righteousness.

2. And when He had thus spent a life in entire conformity to the will of God, how did He close it? Was He carried to heaven in a chariot of fire, as men had been before Him, who were only comparatively righteous? Did divine justice interpose to save Him from the hands of the destroyer, and acknowledge his innocence by exempting Him from the penalty of a broken law? No, He

lived the life of the righteous, but He died the death of the sinner; and amid the agonies of a cruel death, uttered that touching appeal to the God whom He had been serving all his life long, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

And why was this? He had to honour the law in his death as well as in his life. In his life He honoured it by fulfilling all righteousness; in his death He honoured it by atoning for our transgressions of it. And as by his obedience He established a *perfect righteousness*, so by his suffering He made an *infinite atonement*. The obedience of the Son of God to the law reflected a brighter lustre on it than the obedience of the whole human

race or that of the highest archangel; and the sufferings of the Son of God paid a higher penalty, and made a nobler satisfaction, than the eternal punishment of every child of Adam. What He did, He did not for himself, and what He suffered, He suffered not for himself; but all as a second Adam, as the federal head and representative of his people. And now we shall be prepared to understand the declaration of the Apostle, "*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;*" the end of the ceremonial and the end of the moral law. The object of the *ceremonial* law was to wash away the guilt attached to the transgression of the *moral* law; it was a standing witness against the

people to whom it was given; for every time an Israelite offered a sin-offering, or purified himself by the prescribed washing, he acknowledged the transgression whereby he had forfeited all claim to the righteousness of the moral law. In like manner, the death of Christ is a standing witness against the claims of the whole human race to be considered righteous on account of their own obedience. And every time we plead for pardon through the blood of the Cross, we virtually acknowledge that we have forfeited all claim to the righteousness of the law; for we cannot at the same time stand in need of pardon and possess a claim to be accounted righteous; we cannot at the same time merit reward and deserve punishment.

“Christ,” then, “is the end of the law for righteousness;” by his *death* He has taken away the curse, and so is the end of the *ceremonial* law; by his *life* He has merited the blessing, and so is the end of the *moral* law. To borrow the language of our reformers in the Homily on Justification, “because all men are sinners against God and breakers of his law, therefore can no man by his own works (seem they ever so good) be justified and made righteous before God; but every man of necessity is constrained to seek *another* righteousness to be received at God’s own hands. And this righteousness which we so receive of God’s mercy and Christ’s merits, embraced by faith, is allowed of God for our perfect and full justification.

“ Christ is now the righteousness of all them that truly do believe in Him. He for them paid the ransom by his death, He for them fulfilled the law in his life; so that now, in Him and by Him, every true Christian man may be called a fulfiller of the law.” Here then is that justifying righteousness of which we are in search, a righteousness which has perfectly fulfilled the law, and yet a *human* righteousness; such a righteousness as no child of Adam ever wrought out for himself, but which becomes the property of the vilest sinner the moment he truly believes in “the glorious Gospel of the grace of God!”

To this righteousness the Scriptures bear the most unequivocal

witness; it was the theme of prophecy long before it was wrought out; "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, (by the mouth of the Prophet Jeremiah;) that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth; in his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby He shall be called, *the Lord our righteousness.*" "Jehovah, the righteousness of his people," making "them righteous by the imputation of his own righteousness." But as if this announcement were not sufficient, it is said in the parallel passage, (chap. xxxiii. 16.) "This is the name wherewith *she* shall be called,"

i. e. *the Church*. The union between Christ and his Church is illustrated in Scripture in the most striking manner; it is sometimes represented as a parental union, at other times under the similitude of a marriage. "Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name." Messiah himself, addressing his Church, says, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies; I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness. A woman, when she marries, loses her former name for ever; she assumes the name of her husband, and in connexion with this, participates in his rank and honours. Thus *our* name perishes

when we are united to Christ; the name UNGODLY is blotted out, and what is the new name? "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." He who is united to Christ, by a lively faith, can no more be called an ungodly person; that name is gone for ever. The name of God is the believer's name, under which he is to participate in the honour and bliss of his God. To carry on the Scripture allegory, the wife of the Lamb will share his honour for ever, and bear his name through the countless ages of eternity. Such is the testimony which the Prophet Jeremiah bears to the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the imputed righteousness of his people.

And again, the Prophet Daniel

describes the object of Messiah's coming to be "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and *to bring in everlasting righteousness.*" The effect of the Redeemer's death is not only "*to make an end of sins,*" but "*to bring in everlasting righteousness;*" and therefore we are said to be "*justified by his blood,*" because the shedding of his blood was the last thing that He did in "*working out our righteousness;*" "He said, IT IS FINISHED, bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

But let us turn to the express testimonies which the Word of God bears to this righteousness, after it had been wrought out.

In the 3d chapter of the Epistle

to the Romans, the Apostle first of all draws the conclusion at which we arrived in the last chapter. "Therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." "But now *the righteousness of God without the law* is manifested, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ," &c. It is here called the **RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD**, because it is of **HIS** providing. It is elsewhere called "the **RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST**, because He has wrought it out;" the **RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH**, because faith alone receives and appropriates it; and **RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHOUT WORKS**, because it is altogether independent of the works and deservings of man. This variety of expression makes it clear beyond all doubt to every

careful and prayerful reader of the Word of God, that the righteousness in which he is to be justified before God is not his own but another's, even that of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man. In the striking words of the Apostle, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, "God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." That is to say, God dealt with our righteous Saviour as a sinner in our place, that He might be able to deal with us sinners as righteous persons for his sake. "The wages of sin is death:" the sin is ours, the death was the Saviour's. But the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord: the merit is his, but the re-

compense ours, if we truly believe in Him. Here then, dear Reader, you see that perfect righteousness of which we are in search. Here you behold the only atonement that can ever make amends for one single transgression of the law, the only title on which a sinner can lay claim to the rewards of eternity. Is it then asked, "How can man be *justified* with God?" The answer is, "NOT BY WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH WE HAVE DONE, OR EVER CAN DO, BUT BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF OUR SURETY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AS THE MERITORIOUS CAUSE OF OUR PARDON AND ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD."

And what, then, is the practical conclusion of the whole matter; what is the point to which

I would bring you, before we proceed further in the consideration of this momentous question? It is this: to seek, by the grace of God, to arrive at the same state of mind as St. Paul, when he said to the Philippians, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, *that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, BUT THAT WHICH IS THROUGH THE FAITH OF CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF GOD BY FAITH.*" What is there about which you may have just reason to boast, when com-

pared with your fellow-men? Your *honesty*—your *virtue*—your *amiability*—your *generosity*—your *charity*—your attendance at the house of God and the table of the Lord? Learn to “count it but dung,” when considered as the ground of your justification before God, until you can appeal to the Searcher of hearts in the words of one of our Collects; “O God, who knowest that we put not our trust in any thing that we do.” Count it *loss*—*throw it away*, count it *dung*—*despise* and *loathe it*. And when you have done so, when you reckon yourself “the chief of sinners,” when you believe that you have no more right to expect heaven on the ground of your own righteousness than the felon in the jail, or the harlot in the streets, you will be

prepared to seek justification on the ground of a righteousness that is not your own ; you will desire, with St. Paul, to "BE FOUND IN CHRIST, NOT HAVING YOUR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF THE LAW, BUT THAT WHICH IS THROUGH THE FAITH, OF CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF GOD BY FAITH."

CHAPTER III.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

ROM. v. 1.

“ Being justified by faith.”

In considering the difficulties of justification, as implied in the enquiry, “ How can man be just with God?” we gave its due weight to each of the principal terms in the sentence, and we proposed to shape the answer in the same way. We have already enquired into the answer which the Word of God gives to the question of Bildad, as far as the difficulties involved in the term “justified” are concerned. We come

now to shape the answer with more especial reference to another of its emphatic words, "How can *man* be justified with God?" But before we proceed further, it may be well to recal to mind what has already been said, so far as is needful to preserve us from falling into any error inconsistent with truths already established. We must bear in mind, then, that the very key-stone of the arch which Divine wisdom and power have constructed, is the doctrine of *imputed righteousness*. In the words of our 11th Article, "That we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not for our own works and deservings." This takes the ground from under all those confused, muddy, and shifting schemes of sal-

vation so current in the world. Can I be saved by my own sincere though imperfect obedience? No. There is a *perfect* righteousness ready to be reckoned to my account. Does justification by the blood of Christ amount to nothing more than the pardon of sin, and am I then to work out my title to a heavenly inheritance by my own obedience? No. The salvation of Christ bestows freely the rewards of righteousness as well as the pardon of sin: "Eternal life is the GIFT of God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Are my own merits to go as far as they can, and then the merits of Christ to come in and make up the deficiency? No: I have no merits at all, and if I had, they are not needed; for here is a **WHOLE** righteousness freely offered me, to-

gether with all its blessed consequences. Keep this precious truth then steadily in view, and reject every thing that is inconsistent with it.

Having established this truth, we proceed to the enquiry, "How can *man* be justified with God?" In other words, "how can man become interested in the justifying righteousness of Christ?" The answer of the Word of God is, "We are justified *by faith.*" "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness *to every one that believeth.*" "The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all and upon *all them that believe.*" It is this that makes the difference between one and another in the matter of justification before God. One, "going about to establish his own righteousness, does not

submit to the righteousness of God :” that is, to God’s appointed method of justifying the ungodly for Christ’s righteousness sake. The other, seeing the righteousness of Christ to be the only human righteousness that can ever meet the demands of God’s law, with St. Paul, “desires to be found in Him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Faith it is that embraces, applies, and confides in the meritorious righteousness of Christ as the only cause of a sinner’s being held in favour and acceptance with a just and holy God. It is not that there is any merit in faith more than in any other work of man to *deserve* justification, but this alone it is that

has respect to the atonement and merit of Christ, that relies on them as procuring for us pardon and acceptance with God, that considers them not only as the ransom from eternal death, but also as the purchase of eternal life. Faith is the *seeing eye*—the *hearing ear*—the *receiving hand* of the soul. He who has the gifts of sight and hearing escapes many dangers to which the blind and deaf are liable, and enjoys many advantages from which they are debarred. But who thinks of priding himself upon the senses which he has received from God? Or considering them the procuring cause of seeing and hearing? When I look abroad upon the beauties of creation, I see objects which are worthy of being admired in themselves, and my

heart involuntarily exclaims, "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good!" I think nothing of my own eye, which is the instrument of seeing; or if I think of it at all, it is only to bless God who has made me to differ from the blind. Still less do I attribute any *merit* to my own sight, as if it had either called into being the objects before me, or procured for me the benefit of beholding them. It is simply the means of bringing me into communication with the visible world around me. Even so—Faith itself is the gift of God, the work of his Spirit in the soul. With it I contemplate the righteousness of Christ, and discern it to be that righteousness which God has provided for me instead of that which I ought to have but have not. And

while I meditate on the richness, the fulness, the perfection of that righteousness, I am lost in admiration at its own intrinsic glory, and at the grace of God which has provided it for me. I do not dream of ascribing any credit to my own faith. It is simply the faculty whereby I am sensible of the glory of Christ's righteousness and the grace of God who bestows it upon me.

But there is something more in the scriptural idea of faith than that it is "the evidence of things not seen." I may see many things which do not belong to me, and never were designed for me; and like the Samaritan lord, I may see things with my eyes, and not eat thereof. I may perish within sight of salvation.

Faith not only discerns things that

are invisible, but *assents* to them and *relies* upon them, receives and appropriates them; and in this sense it is more fitly described as *the hand* of the soul. In the matter of justification, it is faith that receives as by a hand the righteousness of Christ, and appropriates it to the believer's wants. In Rom. v. 17, it is said, "If by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they who *receive* abundance of grace and of *the gift of righteousness* shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." This verse contains the very essence of the Gospel. "*The gift of righteousness* is freely bestowed by God through Christ, and *received* by the sinner through faith, as by a hand. And what shall we say of the *desert* of faith in this point of view? When the beggar stretches

ferth his hand to receive the alms that are bestowed upon him, does he attach any importance to the act? Does he consider that he has contributed largely to the supply of his wants? I trow not. But this is the part of faith in the justification of a sinner, and in this sense, but no farther, are we said in Scripture to be "*justified by faith.*"

Still, as it is faith, and faith alone, that makes the distinction between him who is justified and him who is not, the Scriptures speak much of faith in connexion with the salvation of men. Our blessed Lord was wont to say to them whom his power had healed, "Thy faith hath saved thee;" and to one who implored his help, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

And St. Paul styles the righteousness of Christ, whereby we are justified, "*the righteousness of faith,*" and "the righteousness of God, which is *by faith* of Jesus Christ, because it is apprehended by faith, and is opposed to our own righteousness, which is of works.

A different form of expression is used by the Apostle in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; (a chapter which deserves the clearest consideration, in connexion with this subject.) He declares of Abraham, that his "*faith was counted to him for righteousness,*" and that "it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but for us also to whom *it shall be imputed,* if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord

from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." This expression throws still further light on the office of faith in justification; for how can faith be said to be "*counted for righteousness?*" Not, certainly, as though faith had a merit of its own which supplied the place of righteousness in other respects; for then "Abraham would have had whereof to glory." Then it could no longer be said that God justifieth *the ungodly*, and that justification "*is of faith that it might be by grace;*" but the meaning of the expression, "*His faith is counted unto him for righteousness,*" when rightly understood, points out still more clearly the connexion between faith and the

righteousness of the Saviour. It has been aptly, though quaintly, illustrated by the value attached to a bank bill; it is itself a worthless piece of paper; its only value consists in this, that it refers the creditor to one who is able and willing to pay.

THUS FAITH REFERS GOD TO CHRIST. When sinful man is called on as a debtor to do the whole law, when he hears the voice of thunder which says, "Do this and live, and cursed be every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them"—when he begins to tremble at the thought of his past transgressions and his present infirmity, faith steps in and refers the Divine justice to Christ,

the Surety for sinners. "Behold, Lord! Christ in my place has perfectly fulfilled thy law, and atoned for my transgressions by his death. Thou hast thyself acknowledged, that if I confess my sins, thou art *faithful and just* to forgive me my sins, and wilt not exact twice over the debt that was due." Thus, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." When viewed in this light, what an inestimable thing is true christian faith! It is a bill issued from the treasury of heaven, written as with the finger of God, in the blood of his own Son. And what is it worth

to its possessor? To what does it pledge "Him that cannot lie?" To the forgiveness of *all sins*, to the blotting out of *all transgressions*, to the imputation of *all righteousness*, to the bestowment of "*all blessings* in heavenly places in Christ." The word of the faithful and true witness must fail, or the infinite riches of divine grace be exhausted, before the simple plea of faith can be rejected, or its draft on the divine bounty be dishonoured. Well may the Apostle Peter call the faith of every christian man, "*precious* faith!"

But there is another sense in which the question may be put, which will draw forth an answer, setting in a still clearer view the nature of justification by faith.

“How can man be justified with God?” *How*—i. e. in what character and capacity? The answer is, as an *ungodly* person. “To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness.” This is, indeed, implied in what has been already stated, for it is a guilty and sinful being alone that can need the righteousness of another to justify him. But it deserves distinct notice for the sake of clearness; and forms a very strong independent testimony to the truths we have been considering. Perhaps, in the whole range of Scripture, there is not a more striking expression, or one involving more stupendous truths than this, “*God justifying the un-*

godly." He himself solemnly declares in his Word, "*I will not justify the wicked.*" Nay, He speaks of those who do so in the strongest language of reprobation, "He that justifieth the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." "He that saith unto the wicked, thou art righteous, him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him." And again, "Woe unto them that justify the wicked for reward."

Yet, after these strong declarations, we hear the Apostle speaking of "believing on Him that justifieth the ungodly," as a thing well pleasing in his sight, so pleasing, that He "counts it to the man for righteousness." And how is this? Is God unrighteous? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Does He contradict himself? Does He act inconsistently with his own law? No more so than when He says in the same breath, "I am the Lord, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin; and *that will by no means clear the guilty.*" How is it then, that He who says, "I will not justify the wicked," can yet "justify the ungodly," without inconsistency? It is because He imputes to him the *righteousness* of another, even of his own co-equal and co-eternal Son. And why does He justify one ungodly man, and not another who is no more ungodly than he? Because the one believeth the glad tidings of the Gospel, and the other believeth not; because the one holds fast his integrity, or his sins, and

rejects the gift of righteousness; the other confesses his sins, renounces his own righteousness, and *receives* the gift of Christ's righteousness with grasping faith and thankful joy.

Thus does this expression of the Apostle corroborate in the strongest manner the truth, that we are justified by the blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. It also proves beyond contradiction, that it is not *on account* of his repentance, or his faith, or any other grace existing or foreseen in the person justified, that God justifies man. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Yet still was he justified as an *ungodly* person. When God "justifies the ungodly," He sees nothing

but sin in the sinner ; and throwing over him the robe of Christ's spotless righteousness, He then sees nothing but holiness. You see, then, dear reader, in what sense we are said in Scripture to be "justified by faith;" simply because it *sees* as with the *eye* of the soul, and *receives* as with the *hand* of the soul, the righteousness of Christ which God has provided, to be instead of that righteousness which we ought to have but have not.

There are three questions which I would put, by way of applying this important subject.

1. IS THIS FAITH YOURS? If it be such a faith as this that makes the difference between those of the human race who are partakers of Christ's righteousness, and those who

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are not, of what infinite importance is it to YOU that you should know whether you possess it or not. I cannot now enter at large into the question, but let us refer to what has been already said respecting this faith. If it be the *eye* of the soul, must not he who believes be as conscious that he does so, as the man who *looks* is conscious that he *sees*? Do you then see the righteousness of Christ to be that righteousness which God has provided for your justification? Have you ever been made sensible of your own spiritual nakedness, and under a sense of shame been led to seek for a covering? Our first parents knew not that they were naked until they had committed sin: their children know not that they are naked until their eyes are opened by

the Spirit of God. He convinces of sin, and the sinner's eyes are opened to perceive his own spiritual nakedness. He "takes of the things of Christ and shows them" to the soul, and the sinner sees that the righteousness of Christ is just what he needs to come between his soul and the pure, searching eye of God, as a garment is what he needs to come between him and the eyes of his fellow-creatures. Have you seen these things? Are you daily seeing them? If not, then have you not that faith which is *the eye* of the soul.

Again, if faith be *the hand* of the soul, must not he who believes be as conscious that he does so, as the man who uses his hand to receive that which is offered to him? Have you

then “*received* the reconciliation?” Have you “received abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness?” Have you found “*peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” and are you *joying* in God through Him? These are the natural effects of receiving the supply of our wants. “The meek shall eat and be satisfied.” If you are not conscious to yourself that you are daily receiving, feeding upon, and enjoying these spiritual blessings, then have you no reason to trust that you possess that faith which is *the hand* of the soul. And the next question is—

2. HOW MAY YOU OBTAIN THIS FAITH? St. Peter addresses himself to those “who *have obtained* like precious faith” with us, “through the righteousness of God and our Sa-

viour Jesus Christ." This faith is to be obtained, then, even a "*like precious faith*" to that which the Apostles themselves had. The question is, "How?" Like every thing else that we need, we must seek it as a covenant blessing at the hand of God. "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above." The Lord Jesus Christ, the great object of faith, is himself "the Author and Finisher of faith." He himself tells us how Peter obtained his faith: when he had professed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Do not suppose, then, that you must wait until by the efforts of

your own will you have *brought yourselves to believe aright*. This would be still to look for something in yourselves to commend you to God. This would be like bringing faith in your hand as a *price*, to purchase justification. But if you stand in doubt of your own faith, ask it of God, as part of the salvation which He has promised freely to bestow. Come with the trembling hope of him who said, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." At the same time, if you are in earnest, you will neglect no scriptural means within your reach for attaining this faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." It is while you are listening to that Word, and pondering its sayings in your heart, that you may expect to have it "*given* you to be-

lieve." It was while she was listening with her ears to "the things that were spoken of Paul," that "the Lord opened the heart" of Lydia to attend to them with her mind. In this, as in every thing else, the Spirit of God worketh insensibly. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." So is every one that believeth.

The last question which I would ask and answer is, **HOW SOON MAY WE TAKE THE COMFORT WHICH SUCH A WONDROUS BLESSING AS FREE JUSTIFICATION IS CALCULATED TO BESTOW?** And this leads me to observe that justification is a *present blessing*. Our final justifi-

cation before *men* cannot, indeed, take place until the Master, whose we are and whom we serve, shall say, in the hearing of the assembled universe, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." But the question we are now endeavouring to answer is, "How can man be justified with God?" and all true religion is matter of experience between God and the soul. We should be warranted then in supposing that God might manifest his pardoning mercy to the believing soul in this life, had his Word been silent on the subject. But its testimony is full and clear: "*Therefore being justified by faith, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.*" A summary of this testimony is thus given, in a

discourse entitled, "Forgiveness a present Mercy," in Blunt's Posthumous Sermons. "Look only at David, the man after God's own heart, and yet a heinous sinner. No sooner had he felt and expressed contrition, than the very same prophet, who was commissioned to convict him of his sin, was in that self-same hour commanded to assure him of forgiveness—'The Lord hath put away thy sin.' Look again at Isaiah: no sooner had he confessed in the bitterness of his soul, 'I am a man of unclean lips,' than the seraphim was ordered to say to him, 'Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged.' Turn again to Hezekiah: no sooner had he declared that he 'mourned for his sins, even as a dove; that his eyes failed with look-

ing upward,' than he was enabled to add, 'Thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.' While so far is this from forming a peculiar feature in the old dispensation, or confined to prophets and kings, that it meets us in every portion of the new, and forms the burden of most of those messages of compassion and love with which the Lord Jesus Christ greeted his sinning and suffering people, 'Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.' While in the Epistles the same great truth is written as with a sunbeam; for we find St. Paul not hesitating to say to the whole Ephesian church—to every one who was a sincere believer—'God, for Christ's sake, hath

forgiven you.' And St. John, to prove to us that this high privilege was not reserved for 'the young men' and 'the fathers' in Christ, but was equally the blessed prerogative of the weakest believer, says at once to the least child in the family of Christ, 'I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.'"

The great, the all-important question then is, "Have you embraced this truth? are you holding it fast? are you able to say, with St. Paul, '*I know whom I have believed*, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day?'" If not, I must refer you to that other well-known saying of his, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all

men to be received, that CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS, of whom I am chief." "WORTHY OF ALL MEN TO BE RECEIVED!" I call upon you, then, dear reader, to receive it NOW. Draw nigh to the throne of grace, as the chief of sinners, in repentance and humiliation of soul ; but "draw nigh *in the full assurance of faith:*" that pardon and acceptance are this day and this hour to be enjoyed through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE.

ROM. iii. 24.

“Justified freely by his grace.”

IN the justification of man there are three parties concerned—the *God* who justifies, the *sinner* who is justified, and the *Saviour* through whom he is justified. And, as we have already seen, the answer to be given to the question of Bildad depends upon which of the parties is chiefly regarded. When the question is asked, “How can man be *justified* with God?” what are the

grounds of his justification? and how are the difficulties met which are involved in the full meaning of the term justified? The answer is, "we are justified by Christ," "justified by his *blood*," as the atonement for our sin, justified by his *righteousness*, as our title to eternal life. Is the question asked, "How can *man* be justified with God?" How can he obtain an interest in the justifying righteousness of Christ? What constitutes the difference between him who is justified by it and him who is not? The answer is, "We are justified by *faith*," which, as a hand, receives and appropriates the righteousness of Christ; and justified by faith *only*, because no other faculty of the soul thus regards the righteousness of Christ, relies upon it, and embraces

it for its own. As we *see* by the *eye* alone, so “we are *justified by faith*” alone. Again, is the question asked, “How can man be justified with *God?*” In what *manner* is justification conferred upon the sinner by Him who justifies? The answer is, “We are justified by *grace*.” Grace made the provision for all, grace bestows the gift upon every one who receives it.

In the words of the Homily before quoted, “Three things go together in our justification. Upon *God’s* part, his great mercy and *grace*; upon *Christ’s* part, *justice*, i. e. the satisfaction of God’s justice, or the price of our redemption, by the offering of his body and shedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the law perfectly and thoroughly; and upon *our* part,

true and lively *faith* in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but by God's working in us." This threefold cord is beautifully displayed in the third chapter of Romans, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE, *through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through FAITH IN HIS BLOOD." In this passage the work of Christ is connected both with the grace of God and the faith of man, "*Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" It is through "redemption" that God is enabled to exercise grace to the undeserving: Christ has paid our ransom—He has satisfied the divine justice to the ut-

termost farthing—He has fulfilled every demand of the law, and by his obedience *earned* eternal life for us ; so that what is debt to Him is grace to us. As it has been well observed, “ The blood of Jesus Christ is represented by himself, and throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews as the ratification of the covenant of grace. “ This,” saith He, “ is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.” So in the Epistle to the Hebrews it is called “ The blood of the everlasting covenant.” It was his blood-shedding which ratified it; the atonement of Christ sealed for ever the covenant of grace of which He was the mediator. It was the fulfilling of every condition upon which God had suspended the free

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communication of grace to the sons of men: it broke down every barrier to the freest, largest exercise of "grace, mercy, and peace," to the most guilty of Adam's race. Henceforth God is "*faithful* and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The Son of God, our surety, has executed all the engagements of the covenant, has done all that he undertook to do. Oh! then, what shall we say more, to quiet the harassed conscience, and encourage the sinner to lay hold on this grace?

Reader! it is infamous, even with worms like ourselves, to refuse the fulfilment of a contract, under such circumstances. Grace, vast as it is to us, loses its character, when considered with reference to Christ.

It is *debt* to Him. God, in dispensing his blessings, “without money and without price,” to those who come to Him through Christ, does but fulfil the truth of his engagements to his Son, when, as Mediator, He made by his one offering of himself, full satisfaction to God on man’s behalf.—*See Goode on the Better Covenant.*

Such is the connexion subsisting between *grace* and *redemption*. The Apostle also makes mention of *faith* in connexion with the atonement. “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation *through faith in his blood.*” The faith of the sinner is needful as the hand that receives the atonement; the reconciliation: the free gift of righteousness; the blessing (by whatever name it be called) which flows from the united sources

of God's grace and Christ's mediation. Faith is the appropriating principle—the faculty whereby man is brought into communication with divine grace, the hand which he puts forth and wherewith he takes all that he needs for the supply of his wants, out of “the fulness that is in Christ Jesus.” But while faith is thus necessary to justification, it does not in any sense or degree deserve it; while it is connected with *the blood* that justifies on the one hand, it is equally consistent with *the grace* that justifies on the other. It does not in any measure propitiate the favour of God, it only *lays hold* on the propitiation that Christ has made. It does not in the slightest degree detract from the sovereign freeness of divine grace, for the Apostle expressly says—

“Therefore it is of FAITH, that it might be by GRACE.”

No view, then, of the office of faith in justification can be scriptural, which is in any way inconsistent with justification by grace. It is the *instrument*, not the *condition* of justification. All the *conditions* of the covenant have been fulfilled by our surety, Christ, and therefore all its blessings are *free* to us ; that which is clogged with a single condition can no longer be called free.

Having thus seen the marked relation between the blood of Christ, the faith of man, and the grace of God in the sinner's justification, let us now go on to take a distinct view of that all-pervading doctrine of Scripture, — “SALVATION BY GRACE.”

Is it asked, "How can man be justified with GOD?" The answer is, "We are justified by his *grace*."

1. In the first place, it is to the grace of God that we owe the *general provision* for the redemption of man. "GOD SO LOVED the world, that HE gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Such is the infirmity of man's fallen mind, that it cannot steadily fix on one truth, without being in danger of overlooking another. We can scarcely contemplate the necessity of a propitiation, without supposing something stern and implacable in the Being to be propitiated. But in considering the great scheme of man's redemption, we must ever re-

member that it is GOD HIMSELF who provides the sacrifice. "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son." So intensely did He love that Son, that it was impossible for the infinitely perfect affections of Godhead to love Him more; yet "He spared not his only begotten Son, but delivered Him up for us all." And the love of God to his dear Son is, at the same time, the measure of his hatred to sin, and his love to sinners. According to the declarations of Scripture, speaking after the manner of men, we may suppose Him revolving in his mind the *sinner*s whose happiness was forfeited for ever, the *sins* they had committed, so hateful in his sight, and the *sufferings* to which his beloved Son

would be exposed in making an atonement for them. On the one hand, the question arises, "Shall *justice* take her course? Shall the human race be allowed to perish as they deserve? Shall I spare *them*, or shall I spare my Son?" The conflict was decided in *our* favour. "God *so loved* the world, that He gave his only begotten Son." On the other hand, the question arises, "Shall *mercy* have free course? Shall sin go alike unpunished and unatoned for? Shall I spare sin or spare my Son?" Inflexible justice decides the course, "God spared not his own Son." It "pleased the Lord to bruise Him" rather than that sin should go unpunished. Such was the grace of God to the whole human race; for, be it observed, that this

provision was made *for all*. "The love of God our Saviour towards man" is Divine "*philanthropy*"*—a feeling that regards all mankind alike as the objects of compassion, and provides relief for all. Christ gave himself a *ransom for all*—a redemption price, or *price paid in exchange* for all. So free and unbounded is the grace of God, that no man is shut out from partaking of it, but he who shuts out himself. And therefore we are commanded to "preach the Gospel to *every creature*." There is not a single individual of the human race to whom

* Titus iii. 4. The words, "The love of God towards man," are in the original expressed by one word, of which "*philanthropy*" is the literal translation.

we may not say, "Unto you are the words of this salvation sent." God judges no man "unworthy of eternal life," who has not first so judged himself, by rejecting the offer of a free salvation; and therefore the whole Gospel is in Scripture termed "the GIFT OF GOD, which bringeth *salvation to all men.*"* "We beseech you, brethren," says the Apostle to the Corinthians, "that ye receive not the grace of God in vain," i. e. that ye hear not the Gospel to no purpose; like those Jews, to whom the Apostles said, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and *judge yourselves* unworthy of everlasting

* Titus ii. 11. (margin.)

life, lo! we turn to the Gentiles." It is a truth which we cannot too firmly fix in our minds, that the "grace of God" is thus *universal* in the extent of the gift of his dear Son. There is nothing on the part of God to prevent the return of the whole human race to his favour. This was "the grace of God," respecting which the Apostle was writing to the Corinthians, and which he exhorts them not to "receive in vain;" "to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling *the world unto himself*, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, **BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD.**" All obstacles to reconciliation are removed

on the part of God. He is reconciled to you; be ye reconciled to Him. He has so loved you, as to give "his Son to be the propitiation for your sins;" let this love kindle yours in return. Listen to his voice, saying unto you, "RETURN UNTO ME, FOR I HAVE REDEEMED THEE;" and let your heart's response be, "I will arise and go to my Father."

2. But, in the next place, it is to the grace of God that we owe *the particular application* of the blessings of the covenant. While the invitation is given to all, so that there is nothing in God that keeps any man from Him, such is the depravity of the human heart, that no man, if left to himself, would ever receive the grace of God to his soul's salvation. "No man," said

our blessed Lord, "can come unto me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." He, therefore, who, in the language of our 17th Article, "feels in himself the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and his earthly members, and *drawing* up his mind to high and heavenly things," may attribute it to the grace of God, and hear him saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." We find justification thus connected with the free favour of God in the 31st verse of the eighth of Romans, "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified." The grace of God, thus extended to "them that are the called according

to his purpose," is grace, superabounding: over and above that which provided salvation for all, and freely offers it to all—grace, without which they too must have perished everlastingly, together with them that believe not. This part of divine truth then, so far from narrowing the grace of God, will be found to magnify it to the utmost. It is beautifully set forth in the 1st of Ephesians, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath *chosen* us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be *holy* and without blame before Him in love, having *predestinated* us to the *adoption* of children by *Jesus Christ* to

himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, *to the praise of the glory of his grace*, wherein He hath made us *accepted in the beloved*." Here we have redemption, forgiveness, justification, adoption, holiness, all ascribed to the *free favour* of God, all made to pay in their tribute "to the praise of the glory of his grace." And what effect has the consideration of this on the believer's mind? It causes him to break forth into exclamations of praise and thanksgiving, "Blessed," exclaims the Apostle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him!" All are *from* the Father and *through* the Son! And "the godly consideration of these things," to quote again our

17th Article, "doth greatly establish and confirm the believer's faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, and doth fervently kindle his love toward God." It causes him to exclaim with the Apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" But—

3. The ACT of justification itself is an act of divine grace. "IT IS GOD THAT JUSTIFIETH." As it is well expressed in the Homily on Justification, "Justification is not the office of man, but of God; for a man cannot make himself righteous by his own works, neither in part, nor in the whole; for that were the greatest presumption of men that

Antichrist could set up against God, to affirm that a man might, by his own works, purge his own sins, and so justify himself. But *justification is the office of God only*, and is not a thing which we render unto Him, but which we receive of Him; not which we give to Him, but which we take of Him, by his free mercy, and by the only merits of his most dearly beloved Son, our only Redeemer, Saviour, and JUSTIFIER, Jesus Christ." Would that these statements were indelibly engraven on the hearts of all the members of our beloved Church! "JUSTIFICATION IS NOT A THING WHICH WE GIVE TO GOD, BUT WHICH WE TAKE OF HIM." This is true from first to last, and will be as true at the day of judgment as at the moment when God first justifies

the ungodly. We are "justified by his grace, that we may be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." "Eternal life is **THE GIFT OF GOD**, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Throughout eternity, then, we shall still be receiving of God, and the ground on which we receive will be the same as that which formed the ground of our free justification at first, even *the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*; and whatever we render back to God, in the shape of devout praise and grateful service, will be accompanied with the acknowledgment of the Psalmist, "Not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise. For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." Here, then, is a test by which we may try

the nature of our present service. Is it carried on upon the principle of *giving to God* or *receiving from Him*? The first is the plan of nature; the second, the plan of grace. The first was the plan of the Jews of old, and is still the plan of all those who, like them, "go about to establish their own righteousness, and do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God." The second was the plan of the apostles and their disciples, and is still the plan of every humble believer who renounces his own righteousness, and receives in faith "abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness by Christ Jesus." On the one plan all is *conditional*; on the other, all is *free*. On the one plan, repentance and faith are the *conditions* of our first justi-

fication, and obedience the condition of our final justification : on the other, repentance, faith, and holiness are themselves regarded as the gifts of God, and are part and parcel of that free salvation which Christ has wrought out for his people. The one plan disappoints man of his hope, and robs God of his glory : the other is "a covenant ordered in all things and sure," whereby salvation is secured to him who embraces it, and "the praise" is given to "the glory of the grace of God."

And now we are prepared to answer the question boldly and unhesitatingly, when asked even with the most fearful emphasis, "How can man be justified with GOD?" "*How?*" "IT IS GOD THAT JUSTIFIETH;" that very Being from whose awful and

glorious attributes the greatest difficulties of the case arose, has himself overcome those difficulties. He has devised and executed a plan whereby He can be at the same time "just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;" so that we may boldly say, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." By this plan all the attributes of Jehovah are made to harmonize in man's salvation, and all the perfections of God are magnified instead of tarnished by the justification of the ungodly. "Mercy and truth

are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

Does the *justice* of God require that an atonement should be made for sin ? Justice has exacted the uttermost farthing of our debt from the suffering Saviour ; so that now, "If we confess our sins, God is *faithful and just*," not to *punish*, but "to *forgive* us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." What an encouraging statement is this ! When the sinner is overwhelmed with a sense of his guilt, the utmost that he hopes to attain is a claim upon the *mercy and compassion* of God. But this passage tells him, that if he believes in Christ he may wear a bolder front ; that he may appeal to the *justice* of God ; for that

his surety, Christ, has “for him fulfilled the law in his life, and for him paid the ransom by his death;” so that in *Him* he, though a transgressor of the law, is counted a “fulfiller of the law”—is exempted from all its penalties, and entitled to all its rewards.

Again, is it needful to show, in the exercise of *mercy* to the offender, the greatest abhorrence of his offence? God has given the strongest proof of his hatred to sin to the whole universe for all eternity, by putting to grief his own dear Son, when bearing the imputation of sin. The appearance of the pardoned offender in heaven will never cast the slightest shadow upon the glory of the divine holiness. The Saviour, in the exercise of his mediatorial sovereignty, took with

Him to Paradise the departed spirit of the penitent thief, who had called on Him only with his dying breath—"Lord, remember me, when thou comest in thy kingdom," and introduced him at once to the society of angels and archangels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect." He needed no other passport than the word of Him who had just poured out his soul unto death, and been numbered among the transgressors, that He might number them among the heirs of life.

Again, does the *goodness* of God to his obedient creatures make Him jealous of "clearing the guilty?" Can man be justified without infringing on the rights of angels? How do these heavenly intelligences regard the salvation of man by

Christ? Not only with complacency, but with delight. They brought to earth the first glad tidings of great joy which related to the birth of Messiah, "Unto *you* is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is. Christ the Lord." And they sang, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.*" They rejoice over every sinner that repenteth: they are continually going forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation: they desire, with holy curiosity, to "look into the things that belong to man's everlasting peace:" nay, it is the express design of God, that "now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known *by the Church* the manifold wisdom

of God, according to his eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." This is the original end contemplated in creation, in redemption, and every work of God. The salvation of "the church of the first-born which are written in heaven," is that work of God whereby his "manifold wisdom," his almighty power, his grace, his mercy, his love, will be as fully revealed throughout all eternity, as it is possible for the creature to comprehend the Creator, the finite to understand the Infinite. "How can man be justified with God?"—The unfolding of this mystery is the very end of all created being. It is a transaction of which the universe is destined to be the theatre and all created intelligences the spectators.

But we are forgetting one fearful class of those beings, "the angels that kept not their first estate," "the evil spirits who have tempted man to sin, and who claim him as the partaker of their punishment." "Can man be justified with God" in such a manner as to silence the accuser, Satan, so that he shall have nothing to urge either against God or man? We are assured that he can. We have the question decided in the 3d chapter of Zechariah. This striking passage shows us that God's sovereign method of justifying man, by causing his iniquities to pass from him, like the taking away of filthy garments, and imputing to him the righteousness of the Son of God, like the clothing him with change of raiment, is so consistent with the

impartial justice, as well as with all the other attributes of God, that Satan will be for ever silenced. There is One who has said, "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand," who shall also say, respecting every humble believer who puts his trust in Him, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan! even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

And now, dear reader! let me call upon you to lay hold of and never let go that threefold cord on which alone salvation from sin, both here and hereafter, depends—JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE—JUSTIFICATION BY BLOOD—JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH. It is that on which all the sinners

who ever were saved are resting their hopes at this moment. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, the faithful in every age and dispensation that preceded the coming of the Saviour; the woman that was a sinner, and Nathanael "the Israelite without guile," the dying thief and Saul the pharisee, the gentle Lydia and the rugged jailor—all who have ever heard of and embraced the salvation of Christ have trusted and are trusting to it at this moment. Lay hold on it, then, and in doing so you will "lay hold on eternal life." Rest your whole weight on it, even the burden of all your sins, and fear not that it will fail you, though you be suspended by it over the very pit of hell.



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